



Algalita Marine Research Foundation
148 N Marina Dr.
Long Beach, CA 90803
562-598-0712
www.algalita.org

November 25, 2007

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor of California

The Honorable Theodore R. Kulongoski
Governor of Oregon

The Honorable Christine O. Gregoire
Governor of Washington

Dear Governors,

Thank you for your commitment to restoring and protecting our shared coastline. In one specific respect we share a desire to reduce the impact of plastic marine debris on our oceans. One of your seven areas of concern, Priority Area 1: Ensure Clean Coastal Waters and Beaches, acknowledges the presence of plastic marine debris in the North Pacific Gyre. Our research aboard the Oceanographic Research Vessel Algalita, led by Captain Charles Moore, has ventured 1000 miles due west of our coast to document the accumulation of plastic marine debris.

Our 1999 published study of plastic in the North Pacific Gyre showed a 6:1 ratio of plastic to plankton, which was three times greater than reports published a decade earlier. You've acknowledged this in your Draft Action Plan. I would like to share with you our recent observations from our most recent expedition conducted in September of this year. After sailing from Los Angeles to Hawaii collecting samples of the ocean surface, our preliminary findings show a five-fold increase in the last 10 years. Though this data is preliminary, it is important to note that the issue of plastics in the ocean is quickly getting worse.

80% of plastic marine debris in the ocean originates along the Pacific Rim. Though the U.S. contribution of trash is difficult to quantify, it is not difficult to see. Our heavily populated

coastline, from Seattle to San Diego, contributes significant plastic trash to the ocean via storm drain runoff, the majority of trash identified as disposable plastics. Your action plan to address this issue states, "Establish baseline estimates of marine debris and derelict gear off the West Coast and set reduction goals. Support state and federal policies for achieving marine debris reduction goals." We applaud your commitment to support scientists, from both government agencies and non-profit organizations that wish to document and monitor plastic marine debris. To stop the problem you've suggested target reduction and debris removal. We wish to emphasize here that there is currently no reasonable method to remove the estimated 3.5 million tons of plastic debris floating in the North Pacific Gyre. The only solution is to "Do No More Harm." Therefore, targeted reductions in both consumption and production of disposable plastic materials are recommended.

We are grateful to have this opportunity to share our research and recommendations with you. As you move forward with the Final Action Plan, we are always available to contribute current findings as the data comes in. Once again, thank you for your leadership and commitment to conserving our coast.

Sincerely,

Marcus Eriksen, PhD
Director of Education and Research

John Fentis
President

Captain Charles Moore
Founder